

CHAPTER 7

Al-A‘râf: The Elevated Places

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 24 *sections*; 206 *verses*)

The title of this chapter is taken from the mention of *Al-A‘râf* or *The Elevated Places* on which stand those righteous servants of Allah who walk perfectly in the ways of truth and goodness.

The prominent theme of this chapter is the truth of Divine revelation, there being occasional references to the doctrine of Divine unity; hence the references to the histories of previous prophets.

The chapter opens with a statement of the truth of the Divine revelation as granted to the Holy Prophet, and its truth is emphasized by a prophetic reference to the doom of those who oppose the propagation of the truth contained therein. The second section shows that opposition to the Prophet is similar to the devil’s opposition to the righteous servants of Allâh, whose prototype is Âdam; and is followed in the third section by a warning to all men against the insinuations of the *shaitân*. The next four sections are devoted to general statements regarding the advent of prophets, the fate of those who reject and ill-treat them, and the ultimate triumph of the righteous. These are followed by four other sections containing illustrations of these general statements as drawn from the histories of five prophets, whose names, and the prominent incidents of whose lives, were known to the Arabs, viz., Nûh, Hûd, Sâlih, Lût, and Shu‘aib. All these prophets, though belonging to different nations and different countries, are mentioned in the chronological order of their appearance. These histories are followed in the twelfth section by a warning to the opponents of the Holy Prophet that if they did not mend their ways they would meet with the same fate as overtook the former opponents of the Truth.

The remaining half of the chapter, with the exception of the last three sections, is taken up entirely with the history of Mûsâ and the Isrâ’îlites, importance being attached to that history on account of the close resemblance of

the Prophet of Arabia to the great Isrâ'îlite prophet, and on account of the clear prophecies of Mûsâ regarding the appearance of a prophet from among the Ismâ'îlites, or the Arab nation. This is the reason that towards the end of that history mention is specially made of the prophecies contained in the *Taurât* and the *Injîl*. The last three sections are again of a general nature, referring first to the impress of Divine Unity upon human being's nature, thus adducing evidence of the truth of revelation; then to the coming of the doom, closing with a final word, containing, as it were, the essence of the two chapters.

The last chapter deals chiefly with the doctrine of Divine Unity, while this deals with the truth of revelation, and as the two subjects are closely inter-related; this chapter complements the last one. Even as the closing section of that chapter deals with the revelation of the Qur'ân, this one fittingly opens with an assertion relating to the Divine source of the revelation contained in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân.

Internal as well as external evidence shows this chapter to have been revealed at about the same time as the last chapter. Hence the date of its revelation may be placed at a period just prior to the Flight. The best opinion among the earliest commentators is that the whole of it was revealed at Makkah.

SECTION 1: Opponents' Doom

I seek the assistance of Allâh the Beneficent Creator the Merciful bounty giver.

1 *alif-lâm-mîm-Sad*,

2 A Book revealed to you - so let there be no straitness in your breast concerning it^a - that you may warn thereby, and a Reminder^b to the believers.

3 Follow what has been revealed to you from your *Rabb* and follow not besides Him any guardians; little do you mind!

4 And how many a town have We destroyed! So Our punishment came to it by night or while they slept at midday.^a

5 Yet their cry, when Our punishment came to them, was nothing but that they said: Surely we were wrong-doers.

1a. Of the four letters *alif*, *lâm*, *mîm*, and *Ṣad*, the first three are the same as at the commencement of chapter 2, for which see 11; while *ṣâd* stands for *Ṣâdiq*, meaning *Truthful*, Whose promise would not fail (*Bahr al-Muhîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû ‘Abd Allâh Abû *Ḥayyân* al-Undlusî), or for *Aḫṣal*, i.e., *the best Decider* (‘*Abd Allâh ibn ‘Abbâs* (Companion) -and- *Bahr al-Muhîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû ‘Abd Allâh Abû *Ḥayyân* al-Undlusî), or for *Ṣabûr*, meaning *the Patient* or *Long-suffering* God Who gives a respite to the wicked and makes His righteous servants to suffer persecution and hardships at their hands for a time.

2a. *Ḥaraj* signifies *straightness* and the parenthetical passage, *so let there be no straightness in your breast concerning it*, is introduced to console the Prophet, who at this time was encountering the greatest opposition and was surrounded by difficulties on all sides, and whose mission so far had made very little progress.

2b. The Qur’ân is very often call *dhikr* or *dhikrâ*, i.e., *a reminder*, because, being in consonance with human nature, it is a reminder of what is imprinted on human nature. Or *dhikrâ* has here the meaning of *dhikr*, i.e., an honour or eminence, as 43:44 may be alternatively rendered: “Surely it is an honour to thee and to thy people” (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by Imâm Muḥibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïḍ Murtaḍâ and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), and in 38:1: “By the Qur’ân, possessing eminence” (*Al-Sihâḥ Tâj al-Lughah wa Sihâḥ al-‘Arabiyyah* (Dictionary) by Ismâ’îl ibn Ḥammâd al-Jawharî and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

4a. The Prophet’s opponents are here warned of a doom similar to the doom of the opponents of truth before them. Truth must be established, be it by the destruction of its opponents or the overthrow of their power, or their ultimate surrender.

6 Then certainly We shall question those to whom messengers were sent, and We shall question the messengers,^a

7 Then surely We shall relate to them with knowledge, and We are never absent.^a

8 And the judging on that day will be just; so as for those whose good deeds are heavy, they are the successful.^a

9 And as for those whose good deeds are light, those are they who ruined their *nafs* because they disbelieved in Our messages.^a

10 And certainly We established you in the earth and made therein means of livelihood for you; little it is that you give thanks!

SECTION 2: The Shaitân 's Opposition to Human beings

11 And We indeed created you, then We fashioned you, then We said to the angels: Make submission to *Âdam*.^a So they submitted, except *Iblîs*; he was not of those who submitted.

6a. Those to whom messengers were sent will be questioned as to how they treated the messengers, and the latter as to how they were received.

7a. Allâh, being the Knower of all things, will declare to them what they had done; in other words, the consequences of their actions will become manifest.

8a. *Wazn* means *the knowing of the measure of the thing* (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharrîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî). And referring to the opening words of this verse, it is added the *allusion is to justice in the reckoning of men*. *Mujâhid* ibn Jâbar (*Tâbi'î*) says *wazn* here means *qadâ*, or *judging* (*Jâmi' al-Bayân fî Tafsîr al-Qur'ân* (Commentary), by Imâm Abû Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarîr al-Tabarî). The word *mawâzin* occurring in the latter part of the verse is plural of *mauzûn* meaning *what is weighed* and *mîzân* meaning *that by which things are weighed* or a *balance*. In the first case *mawâzin* means *good deeds* or *virtues*, because only *good deeds* are weighed - accepted by *Mujâhid* ibn Jâbar (*Tâbi'î*); in the second case, the words would be translated as *the scales being heavy* or *light*, but the heaviness or lightness of the scales is meaningless, unless it means the heaviness or lightness of the good deeds which one has to his credit.

9a. *Zulm*, when made transitive by means of *bâ*, has the meaning of *kufr*. Thus, explaining *zalamû bi-hâ* in v. 103, *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William

Lane says: "It is also made transitive by means of *bâ*, as in the phrase in the Qur'ân (7:103 and 17:59), because the meaning is *kafarû*."

12 He said: What hindered you that you did not submit when I commanded you? He said: I am better than he; You have created me of fire, while him You did create of dust.^a

13 He said: Then get forth from this (state), for it is not for thee to behave proudly therein. Go forth; therefore, surely you are of the abject ones.^a

14 He said: Respite me till the day when they are raised.^a

15 He said: You are surely of the respited ones.

16 He said: As You have adjudged me to be erring,^a I will certainly lie in wait for them in Your straight path,

11a. That what is stated here of *Âdam* is true of all human beings is made clear by the words of this verse. Men are created first, then fashioned, then the order is given to the *malâ'ikah* to make obeisance to *Âdam*, who in this sense typifies human beings, the verse speaking of human beings generally in the opening words. Thus the *malâ'ikah* are really required to make submission to every human being; see 2:34a, 34b, 34c as quoted before.

12a. The creation of man from dust is frequently referred to in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân. Not only is *Âdam* created from dust, but all men are spoken of as being similarly created; see 3:59a. As a contrast to man's creation from dust, the devil claims to have been created from fire. The meaning may be that the preponderating element in the creation of man is earth, while in that of the devil it is fire. There may be a reference here to the nature of the temperaments of the two classes, men and devils. The Arabic Glorious Qur'ân says elsewhere: "Man is created of haste" (21:37), which means that he is *hasty*. In like manner the devil's creation of fire may mean that he is made of a fiery temperament, while the perfect man is humble and meek, being created of dust, which stands for humility and meekness. Thus the description given here may stand for the prominent characteristics of the temperaments of the two classes of beings. Elsewhere it is

stated that the jinn were created of fire (15:27), and also that Iblîs was of the jinn (18:50).

13a. Degradation has always been the punishment of those who oppose the prophets of Allâh. He abases those who consider themselves mighty.

14a. The *shaitân*'s grip continues only so long as man is not spiritually raised to life. The raising here stands for the spiritual resurrection of man. If the Resurrection is meant, the significance would be that the devil would mislead man so long as man lives on this earth.

17 Then I shall certainly come upon them from before them and from behind them, and from their right and from their left; and You will not find most of them thankful.

18 He said: Get out of it, despised, driven away. Whoever of them will follow you, I will certainly fill hell with you all.

19 And (We said): O *Âdam*, dwell you and your wife in the garden, so eat from whence you desire, but go not near this tree, lest you become of the unjust.^a

20 But the *shaitân* made an evil suggestion to them that he might make manifest to them that which had been hidden from them of their shame,^a and he said: Your Lord has forbidden you this tree, lest you become *malâ'ikah* or become of the immortals.

21 And he swore to them both: Surely I am a sincere adviser to you.

22 Thus he caused them to fall by deceit. So when they had tasted of the tree, their shame became manifest to them, and they both began to cover themselves with the leaves of the garden.^a And their *Rabb* called to them: Did I not forbid you that tree, and say to you that the *shaitân* is surely your open enemy?

16a. *Aghwâ-hu* (from *ghawâ*, *he erred*) ordinarily signifies *he caused him to err*, but sometimes also indicates *punishing for error*. Thus *yughwiya-kum* in 11:34 is said to mean if Allah desire to *punish you for erring* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane); or, according to T, it means *yahkuma 'alai-kum bi-ghayyi-kum* or *adjudge you to be erring*. According to *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî, the meaning is that *He should cause you to perish*.

But *ghawâ* (of which *aghwa* is the causative form) means also *khâba* (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtadâ*, and *Lisân al-‘Arab* (Dictionary), by ‘Allâmah Abu-l-Fadl Jamâl al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Mukarram), i.e. *he was disappointed or failed to attain his desire*, and also *fasada ‘alai-hi ‘aishu-hû* (*Lisân al-‘Arab* (Dictionary), by ‘Allâmah Abu-l-Fadl Jamâl al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Mukarram), i.e. *his life became evil to him* (which is the correct significance of *ghawâ* in 20:121). Therefore the words may also be interpreted as meaning *You have made life evil to me*, or *You have caused me to remain disappointed*.

19a. See 2:35c for the significance of the tree.

20a. *Sau’at* signifies *shame* or *parts of the body which it is necessary to cover*, and also *any saying or action of which one is ashamed when exposed to view*, or *any evil, abominable or unseemly property, quality, custom, or practice* (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtadâ*, and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The devil’s suggestions always lead man to the disclosure of his shame.

23 They said: Our *Rabb*, we have wronged ourselves; and if You forgive us not, and have (not) mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers.

24 He said: Go forth - some of you, the enemies of others. And there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time.

25 He said: Therein shall you live, and therein shall you die, and there from shall you be raised.^a

SECTION 3: Warning against the *shayâtîn*’s Insinuations

26 O children of *Âdam*, We have indeed sent down to you clothing to cover your shame, and (clothing) for beauty;^a and clothing that guards against evil - that is the best.^b This is of the messages of Allâh that they may be mindful.

22a. The consciousness of having done something unworthy of oneself is the surest way to the attainment of perfection. The covering with the leaves of the garden is the desire to make up by human effort any fault that may have been

committed. The clothing that guards against evil, which is spoken of in verse 26 as being *the best clothing*, explains the meaning of *covering* here. Divine revelation points out to man the true way, enabling him to cover himself or guard himself against evil. And, further, the statement in verse 27, *pulling off from them both their clothing that he might show them their shame* shows that covering with the leaves of the garden is an allegorical statement; see 27a. The Qur'ân gives directions regarding the physical requirements of man, too, yet there is even in these an underlying idea of the spiritual elevation of man.

25a. This verse proves conclusively that every man must live and die upon this earth. 'Îsâ could not be an exception to this rule.

26a. *Rîsh* means originally *feathers* or *plumage*, constituting the clothing and ornament of birds, and is then applied to *superb* or *excellent clothing*, or *ornament* and *beauty* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

26b. Clothing at first simply served to cover shame; with further progress men sought to embellish their persons with it; but there is yet a third kind of clothing, says the Qur'ân, which is the best, and that is *libâs al-taqwâ*, or *the clothing of piety*, literally *the clothing that guards one against evil*. It indicates a further step in the progress of man, for virtue is an embellishment of the mind, and when man has seen the good of embellishing his person, he will soon be aware of the necessity of embellishing his mind.

27 O children of Âdam, let not the *shaitân* seduce you, as he expelled your parents from the garden, pulling off from them their clothing^a that he might show them their shame. He surely sees you, he as well as his host, from whence you see them not. Surely We have made the *shayâtîn* to be the friends of those who believe not.^b

28 And when they commit an indecency they say: We found our fathers doing this, and Allâh has enjoined it on us. Say: Surely Allâh enjoins not indecency. Do you say of Allâh what you know not?^a

29 Say: My *Rabb* enjoins justice.^a And set upright your faces at every time of prayer and call on Him, being sincere to Him in obedience. As He brought you into being, so shall you return.

30 A party has He guided, and another party - perdition is justly their due.^a Surely they took the *shayâtîn* for friends instead of Allâh, and they think that they are rightly guided.

27a. That the clothing for the body is not meant here is clear from the fact that all men are warned against a similar attack of the *shaitân*. As to the clothing of which Âdam was divested, there remains no doubt, when it is seen that the devil tries to divest every child of Âdam of the same clothing. *Mujâhid* ibn Jâbar (*Tâbi'î*) says: *It is the clothing that guards against evil, and by their sau'at is meant the evil that afflicted them on account of their disobedience* (*Bahr al-Muhîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû 'Abd Allâh Abû Hayyân al-Undlusî).

27b. It is because they do not believe in the Truth that the *shayâtîn* are made their friends; those who sever their connection with the Source of purity must fall into impurity.

28a. The indecency here referred to is considered by some their going naked round the Ka'bah (*Mujâhid* ibn Jâbar (*Tâbi'î*) -and - *Jâmi' al-Bayân fî Tafsîr al-Qur'ân* (Commentary), by Imâm Abû Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarîr al-Ṭabarî). But the statement is general, and need not be limited.

29a. The word *qist* is variously explained as meaning *Divine Unity; what is good and right; truth* (*Bahr al-Muhîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû 'Abd Allâh Abû Hayyân al-Undlusî). All these are really included in the literal meaning of the word *qist*, which signifies *justice* in its broadest sense.

31 O children of Âdam, attend to your adornment at every time of prayer, and eat and drink and be not prodigal; surely He loves not the prodigals.^a

SECTION 4: Messengers sent for Uplift of Humanity

32 Say: Who has forbidden the adornment of Allâh,^a which He has brought forth for His servants, and the good provisions? Say: These are for the believers in the

life of this world, purely (theirs) on the Resurrection day.^b Thus do We make the messages clear for a people who know.

30a. *Haqqa* ‘alai-hi *kadhâ* means *wajaba* or *thabata* (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtadâ*) and, according to *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane, the significance in such cases is that *a certain thing has become necessary as suited to the requirements of justice in his case*. And *dalâlah* sometimes signifies the *punishment for dalâlah* (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur’ân* (Dictionary of Qur’ân), by *Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî*), or *a state of perdition* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Or, the meaning is that *going astray or remaining in error* is suitable to the requirements of justice in their case. In fact, the words explain themselves: *Error is justly their due because they have taken the devils for their friends*. Whoever continues to follow the *shaitân* must surely remain in error.

31a. *Zînat* or *adornment* is here generally understood to mean *apparel*, with reference to the practice of going naked round the Ka‘bah, but the word itself has a wider significance. According to the *Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur’ân* (Dictionary of Qur’ân), by *Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî*, *real adornment is that which does not disgrace or render unseemly a man in any one of his conditions either in the present life or in that which is to come*. Attending to one’s adornment, therefore, carries a double significance here. It requires adorning oneself physically, i.e. a man must have his clothes on when he offers a prayer to Allâh. In congregational prayers, in the vast gatherings on Fridays and ‘Id, the Muslims are required to have a bath before coming to the Mosque, to put their best clothes on and to use scent. But what is specially aimed at is adornment in a devotional sense. A Muslim must attend to inner beautification, for prayer is really meant as an aid to the beauty of the *nafs*. He must come to prayer with a heart free from all impurities and full of the highest aspirations and noblest sentiments.

32a. By *the adornment of Allâh* is meant *the adornment which Allâh has made lawful for men to avail themselves of*.

32b. The meaning is that in the life of this world the believer and the disbeliever equally profit by the good things, but in the life after death all good shall be exclusively for those who have accepted and acted on the right principles.

33 Say: My *Rabb* forbids only indecencies, such of them as are apparent and such as are concealed, and sin and unjust rebellion, and that you associate with Allâh that for which He has sent down no authority, and that you say of Allâh what you know not.

34 And every nation has a term;^a so when its term comes, they cannot remain behind the least while, nor can they precede (it).

35 O children of Âdam, if messengers come to you from among you relating to you My messages, then whosoever guards against evil and acts aright - they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.

36 And those who reject Our messages and turn away from them haughtily - these are the companions of the Fire; they shall abide in it.

37 Who is then more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allâh or rejects His messages? These – their portion of the Book shall reach them;^a until when Our messengers come to them causing them to die, they say: Where is that which you used to call upon besides Allâh? They would say: They are gone away from us. And they shall bear witness against themselves that they were disbelievers.

38 He will say: Enter into the Fire among the nations that have passed away before you from among the *jinn* and men. Every time a nation enters, it curses its sister;^a until when they all follow one another into it, the last of them will say with regard to the first of them.^b Our *Rabb*, these led us astray, so give them a double chastisement of the Fire. He will say: Each one has double but you know not.^c

34a. The term of a nation is the time when it is destroyed or punished for its evil deeds. The verse really speaks in general terms of the doom awaiting the opponents of Islâm.

37a. That is, the punishment promised in the Book will overtake them.

39 And the first of them will say to the last of them: You have no preference over us, so taste the chastisement for what you earned.

SECTION 5: **Those who accept the Message**

40 Those who reject Our messages and turn away from them haughtily, the doors of heaven will not be opened for them, nor will they enter the Garden until the camel pass through the eye of the needle. And thus do We reward the guilty.^a

41 They shall have a bed of hell and over them coverings (of it). And thus do We requite the wrongdoers.

42 And as for those who believe and do good . We impose not on any *nafs* a duty beyond its scope - they are the owners of the Garden; therein they abide.

38a. By the sister nation is meant the nation which resembles it in its deeds.

38b. By the *last* and the *first* are meant here the common people and the leaders, because, though the words would bear both interpretations, i.e. the last and the first in time or the last and the first in position, the latter significance is corroborated by similar expressions in several other places, such as 2:166, 14:21, 34:31.33, 40:47, etc.

38c. The common people would desire that the leaders should suffer a double torment, for their own sins as well as for having misled others. They are told that if the leaders were guilty of misleading them, they themselves deserved a double chastisement for having blindly followed the leaders.

40a. That is, they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, nor can they rise above the low earthly desires, soaring upward to the higher regions of devotional life.

43 And We shall remove whatever of ill-feeling is in their hearts - rivers flow beneath them. And they say: All praise is due to Allâh, Who guided us to this! And we would not have found the way if Allâh had not guided us. Certainly the messengers of our *Rabb* brought the truth. And it will be cried out to them: This is the Garden which you are made to inherit for what you did.

44 And the owners of the Garden call out to the companions of the Fire: We have found that which our *Rabb* promised us to be true; have you, too, found that which your Lord promised to be true? They will say: Yes. Then a crier will cry out among them: The curse of Allâh is on the wrongdoers,

45 Who hinder (people) from Allâh's way and seek to make it crooked, and they are disbelievers in the Hereafter.^a

46 And between them is a veil.^a And on the Elevated Places^b are men who know all by their marks. And they call out to the owners of the Garden: Peace be to you! They have not yet entered it, though they hope.^c

45a. By seeking to make Allah's way crooked is meant that they suggest doubts regarding the Truth.

46a. The veil which here separates the wicked from the righteous and on account of which the former fail to see the bliss which the latter enjoy will assume a perceptible form in the next life. Thus it is not distance that separates heaven from hell but only a veil, and they hear and even see one another.

46b. *A'râf* is a plural of *'arf*, meaning literally *an elevated place*, and hence *al-a'râf* means *the elevated places*. There has been much discussion as to what *a'râf* is. The majority of commentators say that it is the *hijâb* or *veil* spoken of in the previous words, or the *sûr* or *wall* spoken of in 57:13; while others, among whom are Hasan and *Zajjâj* (Grammarians), hold that *'ala-l-a'râf* is only equivalent to *'alâ ma'rîfatî ahl al-Jannat wa-l-Nâr*, i.e. *knowing the inmates of Paradise and the inmates of Hell* (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). I have already explained the nature of the veil mentioned in verse 46. And the *wall* in 57:13 is mentioned in connection with the bringing about of a separation between the sincere believers and the hypocrites. Hence the two verses lend no support to the idea that *A'râf* is a particular place midway between paradise and hell. The men spoken of here as being on the elevated places are the same righteous servants of Allâh who are distinctly mentioned in 56:10, 11: "And the foremost are the foremost - these are drawn nigh to Allâh". Besides this, the prophets are again and again spoken of as a class by themselves, being witnesses over their people.

47 And when their eyes are turned towards the companions of the Fire, they say: Our Lord, place us not with the unjust people.^a

SECTION 6: Helplessness of Opponents

48 And the owners of the Elevated Places call out to men, whom they recognize by their marks, saying: Of no avail were to you your amassing^a and your arrogance.

49 Are these they about whom you swore that Allâh would not bestow mercy on them? Enter the Garden; you have no fear, nor shall you grieve.

50 And the companions of the Fire call out to the owners of the Garden: Pour on us some water or some of that which Allâh has provided for you. They say: Surely Allâh has forbidden them both to the disbelievers,

51 Who take their *dîn* for an idle sport and a play, and this world's life deceives them. So this day We shall forsake them,^a as they neglected the meeting of this day of theirs, and as they denied Our messages.

46c. They are, as it were, standing at the door of the Garden, ready to enter it.

47a. Thus do pray those who hope to enter paradise.

48a. The word *jam 'u-kum* may mean either *your amassing worldly wealth*, or it may mean *your multitude* or *strength in numbers*.

52 And certainly We have brought them a Book which We make clear with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe.

53 Do they wait for aught but its final sequel?^a On the day when its final sequel comes, those who neglected it before will say: Indeed the messengers of our Lord brought the truth. Are there any intercessors on our behalf so that they should intercede for us? Or could we be sent back so that we should do (deeds) other than those which we did? Indeed they have lost their souls, and that which they forged has failed them.

SECTION 7: The Righteous will prosper

54 Surely your *Rabb* is Allâh, Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods,^a and He is established on the Throne of Power.^b He makes the night cover the day, which it pursues incessantly. And (He created) the sun and the moon and the stars, made subservient by His command. Surely His is the creation and the command. Blessed is Allâh, the *Rabb* of the worlds!

51a. The use of *nisyân* is not limited to *forgetting*; the word applies as well to *dismissing a thing from the mind intentionally* (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain *al-Râghib al-Isfahânî*). And when the word is used about Allâh, it means *His forsaking them to show His contempt for them* (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain *al-Râghib al-Isfahânî*).

53a. By *final sequel* is meant the *ultimate state* of the perfect manifestation of truth by the fulfilment of the prophecies, *the end* or *the ultimate consequence*; see 4:59b.

54a. For *yaum* as meaning a *period, whatever period it may be*, see 1:3b. The six periods of time in which the heavens and the earth are created refer in fact to the six stages in which they have grown to their present condition. In the case of the earth these six stages are detailed in 41: 9, 10; see 41:10a.

54b. '*Arsh* ("Throne of Power") literally means *a thing constructed for shade* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), or *anything roofed* (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain *al-Râghib al-Isfahânî*). According to the latter authority *the court* or *sitting-place of the king* is called '*arsh* on account of its eminence. And he adds: It is used to indicate *might* or *power* and *authority* and *dominion*. The *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane accepts the interpretation of the *Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain *al-Râghib al-Isfahânî*, who says that "the '*arsh* of God is one of the things which mankind know not in reality but only by name, and it is not as the imaginations of the vulgar hold it to be". In fact, both the words '*arsh* and *kursî*

have been misunderstood as meaning resting-places for Allâh. The latter has already been explained as meaning *knowledge* (2:255b), and the true significance of the former is *power or control of the creation*. *Istawâ* signifies, when followed by 'ala, *he had the mastery or control of a thing or ascendancy over it*, being synonymous with *istaulâ* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), or *he was or became firm* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

Thumma, as already shown in 2:29a, has often the same significance as *wâw* and means *and*.

The phrase *Istawâ 'ala-l-'arsh* ("He is established on the Throne of Power") is used in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân here and on six other occasions, viz., in 10:3, 13:2, 20:5, 25:59, 32:4 and 57:4. A reference to all these places will show that it is invariably used after mentioning the creation of the heavens and the earth and in relation to the Divine control of His creation and the law and order to which the universe is made to submit by its great Author, as shown by the words that follow here, *His is the creation and the command*. The two things mentioned are, in the opening words, *creation* and *'arsh*, and in the concluding words, *creation* and *command*. Similarly in 10:3 where *'arsh* is spoken of after the creation of the heavens and the earth, it is followed by the explanatory words *yudabbiru-l-amr*, i.e., *He regulates the affair*. What is, therefore, aimed at is that after creating the universe, Allâh has not left it to run its course independently of Him, but He it is Whose command holds sway and Who regulates the affairs as He has planned them. There are many people in this age of scientific advancement who think that, though the conclusion cannot be avoided that there is a Allâh Who created this universe, Whom they call the First or Primal Cause, yet after its creation it runs its course according to certain immutable laws, and Allâh - or the First Cause - has no concern with its affairs. The Arabic Glorious Qur'ân does not accept this view and hence, when it speaks of the creation of the heavens and the earth, it speaks also of the *'arsh* which stands for Allâh's control of the universe, as shown above. To make it further clear, the verse is made to end with the words *tabâarak Allâhu Rabbu-l-'âlamîn*, i.e., *blessed is Allâh, the Nourisher of the worlds unto perfection*. These words show that the world is still in the process of growth, and according to the Divine plan, it is advancing from one stage to another to

attain its perfection. Allâh has not only created it but He is also regulating its affairs to make it perfect.

In the words *Rabb al-‘alamîn* there is also a deeper reference, as shown in 1:1a, to the spiritual evolution of man which is being worked out under the Divine plan, and the ‘*arsh*’ is mentioned specially in this connection, as man’s perfection does not consist in the working of the material laws which prevail in the universe but in the devotional laws which are needed for his perfection. The *amr* (affair) whose regulation is so often mentioned in connection with ‘*arsh*’ is really the devotional kingdom, what “Jesus” calls the kingdom of God. This is made clear in 32:5; see 32:5a. The devotional perfection of human beings is specially mentioned in connection with ‘*arsh*’ in 40:15: “Exalter of degrees, *Rabb* of the ‘*arsh*’, He makes the Divine revelation to light by His command upon whom He pleases of His servants, that he may warn (men) of the day of Meeting.” The *Rabb of the ‘arsh*’ is thus clearly stated to be the *Sender of revelation* to man to bring about his devotional perfection. Still more clearly in the same *sûrah*, the righteous servants of Allâh who deliver the Divine messages to human beings are called the bearers of the ‘*arsh*’. Speaking of the messages of the messengers of Allâh and how the people give them the lie, it is added: “Those who bear the ‘*arsh*’ and those around it celebrate the praise of their *Rabb* and believe in Him and ask protection for those who believe” (40:7). The bearers of the ‘*arsh*’ are, in fact, the bearers of the Divine message.

55 Call on your *Rabb* humbly and in secret. Surely He loves not the transgressors.

56 And make not mischief in the earth after its reformation, and call on Him, fearing and hoping. Surely the mercy of Allâh is nigh to the doers of good.^a

57 And He it is Who sends forth the winds bearing good news before His mercy;^a till, when they bear a laden cloud, We drive it to a dead land, then We send down water on it, then bring forth thereby fruits of all kinds. Thus do We bring forth the dead that you may be mindful.^b

58 And the good land - its vegetation comes forth (abundantly) by the permission of its *Rabb*. And that which is inferior - (its herbage) comes forth but scantily. Thus do We repeat the messages for a people who give thanks.^a

56a. The feeling which should be entertained towards Allâh should be a combination of fear and hope, of awe as well as love, because the fear of His displeasure ennoble the mind no less than the hope of His mercy.

57a. His *mercy* represents the rain in the physical world.

57b. The bringing forth of the devotionally dead to life through the revelation of the Qur'ân is always likened to the bringing of the dead earth to life by rain. The wind bearing the good news was the movement towards Islâm, which was daily becoming more and more powerful.

58a. Revelation is here likened to the rain and the good or bad nature of man to good or inferior land. If some men do not profit by the revelation, it is their own fault, not that of the revelation, just as, if some lands do not profit by rain, it is due to their own inferiority.

SECTION 8: **Nûh**

59 Certainly We sent Nûh to his people, so he said: O my people, serve Allâh, you have no god other than Him. Indeed I fear for you the chastisement of a grievous day.^a

60 The chiefs of his people said: Surely we see you in clear error.

61 He said: O my people, there is no error in me, but I am a messenger from the *Rabb* of the worlds.

62 I deliver to you the messages of my *Rabb*, and I offer you good advice, and I know from Allâh what you know not.

63 Do you wonder that a reminder has come to you from your *Rabb* through a man from among you, that he may warn you and that you may guard against evil, and that mercy may be shown to you?

59a. Having warned the opponents of the evil consequences of their opposition to the Holy Prophet, several illustrations are now given from sacred history, showing how those people were dealt with who refused to listen to the voice of the warners. It should be borne in mind in reading the histories of the prophets as given in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân that the object is not to narrate history as such, but to bring out common characteristics of the histories of different nations, to mention incidents which contain prophetic allusion to the Holy Prophet's life and to illustrate the general warnings made regarding the ultimate consequences attendant upon the rejection of Truth. The Qur'ân does not concern itself with the details of what messages a prophet delivered to his people and of how he was received; it simply contents itself with the broad facts that every prophet preached Divine Unity, every prophet laid stress on the doing of good, every prophet was received with severe opposition, and that every prophet ultimately succeeded in establishing the truth. This, with slight variations, is the sum and substance of the histories of the prophets that are recorded in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân. It is not, as stated by a Christian critic, "the experience of Muḥammad" that is recorded in the histories of prophets; it is the common experience of the prophets of different nations, containing a prophetic allusion to the ultimate triumph of the Prophet. This is clear from the fact that the histories of the prophets relating the destruction of their opponents are contained chiefly in Makkan revelations, whereas at Makkah the opponents of the Holy Prophet were at the zenith of their power, and the cause of the Prophet was to all appearances hopeless. References to Nûḥ and his history are contained in the following places in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân: 3:33; 6:84; 7:59.64; 10:71.73; 11:25. 48; 14:9; 17:3; 21:76, 77; 23:23.29; 25:37; 26:105.122; 29:14, 15; 37:75.82; 51:46; 53:52; 54:9.16; 57:26; 66:10; 69:11.12; 71:1.28.

64 But they called him a liar, so We delivered him and those with him in the ark, and We drowned those who rejected Our messages. Surely they were a blind people!^a

SECTION 9: **Hûd**

65 And to ‘Âd^a (We sent) their brother^b Hûd.^c He said: O my people, serve Allâh, you have no deity other than Him. Will you not then guard against evil?

66 The chiefs of those who disbelieved from among his people said: Certainly we see you in folly, and we certainly think you to be of the liars.

64a. Fuller references to the deluge and the making of the ark are contained in 11:37. 48 and 23:27.29. It may be noted here, however, that the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân does not support the idea of a world deluge, for it plainly states here that Noah was sent only to *his* people, i.e. not to all nations. Only the people to whom Nûh delivered his message called him a liar, and only those were drowned who rejected the message of Allâh delivered through Nûh.

65a. The tribe of ‘Âd, with its prophet Hûd, is mentioned in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân in the following places: 7:65.72; 11:50. 60; 14:9; 25:38; 26:123.140; 29:38; 41:13.16; 46:21.26; 51:41, 42; 53:50; 54:18.21; 69:4; 69:6 . 8; 89:6. 8. ‘Âd was the grandson of Aram (mentioned in 89:7), who was a grandson of Nûh, and the tribe of ‘Âd spoken of here is called *the first ‘Âd* (53:50), as distinguished from the tribe of Thamûd, which is called *the second ‘Âd*. This tribe lived in the desert of al-Ahqâf (46:21) which is marked on the maps of Arabia and extends from Oman to Hadramaut. Rodwell’s view, that “the two tribes of ‘Âd and Thamûd - the latter of whom is mentioned by Diod. (Sic) and Ptolemy - lay to the north of Mecca”, is wrong in respect of the tribe of ‘Âd, though it is tolerably true so far as the tribe of Thamûd is concerned. Sale has the following account of this tribe in his Pr. Dis.: “‘Âd was an ancient and potent tribe of Arabs and zealous idolaters. They chiefly worshipped four deities, Sâqiyah, Hâfîzâh, Râziqah, and Sâlimah, the first, as they imagined, supplying them with rain, the second preserving them from all dangers abroad, the third providing food for their sustenance, and the fourth restoring them to health when afflicted with sickness”.

65b. The male member of a tribe is generally spoken of as their brother: “Thus *yâ akhâ Bakr-in* means, O thou of the tribe of Bakr” (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

65c. The prophet Hûd is the Eber of the Bible, because Hûd is said to be the grandson of Arphaxad, the grandson of Nûh (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by

Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). Compare Gen. 10:24 for Eber's genealogy. His son Joktan is said to have established a kingdom in Yûnân. There is no mention in the Bible that Hûd was a prophet for 'Âd.

67 He said: O my people, there is no folly in me, but I am a messenger of the *Rabb* of the worlds.

68 I deliver to you the messages of my *Rabb* and I am a faithful adviser to you.

69 Do you wonder that a reminder has come to you from your *Rabb* through a man from among you that he may warn you? And remember when He made you successors after Nûh's people^a and increased you in excellence of make.^b So remember the bounties of Allâh, that you may be successful.

70 They said: Have you come to us that we may serve Allâh alone, and give up that which our fathers used to serve? Then bring to us what you threaten us with, if you are of the truthful.

71 He said: Indeed uncleanness and wrath from your *Rabb* have lighted upon you.^a Do you dispute with me about names which you and your fathers have named?^b Allâh has not sent any authority for them. Wait, then; I too with you am of those who wait.

69a. By making the 'Âdites *khulafâ* or *successors* is meant that they were made a ruling nation and possessors of a vast kingdom.

69b. Some commentators have related unfounded legends as to the incredible tallness of their stature. The words used in the Qur'ân signify only that they were a strong and powerful people.

71a. Sticking to their idols and refusing to believe in Allâh is here spoken of as *uncleanness*. The wrath of Allâh was due to their evil deeds. There is also a secondary significance of the word *rijs*, i.e. *punishment*, and in that case the past tense would indicate the certainty of the event, because punishment was so sure to come that it could be spoken of as having *lighted* upon them.

71b. The reference here is to their deities, for which see 65a.

72 So We delivered him and those with him by mercy from Us, and We cut off the roots of those who rejected Our messages and were not believers.^a

SECTION 10: Sâlih and Lût

73 And to Thamûd^a (We sent) their brother Sâlih.^b He said: O my people, serve Allâh, you have no god other than Him. Clear proof has indeed come to you from your *Rabb*. This is Allâh's she-camel - a sign for you^c- so leave her alone to pasture in Allâh's earth, and do her no harm, lest painful chastisement overtake you.

72a. They were destroyed by a storm blowing on them continuously for eight days (69:7).

73a. The tribe of Thamûd is often mentioned in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân conjointly with the tribe of 'Âd. It is spoken of in the following places: 7:73 .79; 11:61. 68; 14:9; 15:80.84; 25:38; 26:141.159; 27:45.53; 29:38; 41:13, 14, 17, 18; 51:43 . 45; 53:51; 54:23.31; 69:4, 5; 89:9; 91:11.15. 'Âd and Thamûd, though two nearly related tribes, were separated both as regards time and place. Thamûd is known after a grandson of Aram, the grandson of Nûh. Historical traces of it are met with in Ptolemy. The tribe flourished more than two hundred years after 'Âd, and occupied the territory known as al-Hijr (15:80), and the plain known by the name of Wâdi-l-Qurâ, which forms the southern boundary of Syria and the northern one of Arabia.

73b. Sâlih was a descendant in the sixth generation after Thamûd.

73c. Neither the Qur'ân nor any reliable saying of the Holy Prophet lends any support to the numerous legends regarding the miraculous appearance and prodigious size of the she-camel. It is called *Allâh's she-camel* because it was given as a sign from Allâh. It was an ordinary she-camel, which was given as a sign to a people. Their slaying of it was a sign that they would neither accept the truth, nor cease persecuting Sâlih and his followers.

It may be noted here that there is nothing strange that a camel should be given as a sign, when even now we can see that a roughly constructed house

known as the Ka‘bah is given as a sign to the whole world, so that whoever tries to destroy it will perish.

74 And remember when He made you successors after ‘Âd and settled you in the land - you make mansions on its plains and hew out houses in the mountains.^a So remember Allâh’s bounties and act not corruptly in the land, making mischief.

75 The arrogant chiefs of his people said to those who were weak, to those who believed from among them: Do you know that Sâlih is one sent by his *Rabb*? They said: Surely we are believers in that wherewith he has been sent.

76 Those who were haughty said: Surely we are disbelievers in that which you believe.

77 Then they hamstrung the she-camel and revolted against their *Rabb*’s commandment, and said; O Sâlih, bring us that with which you threaten us, if you art of the messengers.

78 So the earthquake seized them, and they were motionless bodies in their abodes.^a

74a. In his *Essays on the Life of Muḥammad*, Sir Syed Aḥmad Khân says: “They excavated various rocks, and after having hewn and carved them, took up their abode therein. These rocks are to this very day known by the name of *Athâlib*. Almost every Arab, as well as several foreigners who have travelled in Arabia, can bear testimony to the existence of these rock habitations, which stand there at once to satisfy curiosity and to afford information respecting the nations who made them. These habitations likewise corroborate and bear testimony to the truth of that portion of the history of the Thamûd tribe which is mentioned in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân.”

78a. The punishment which overtook Thamûd is described under different names. Here it is called *rajfah*, which means *earthquake*. The description of their abodes in 27:52 as *fallen down* also shows that they were destroyed by an earthquake. In 54:31 the same punishment is referred to as saiḥah, i.e. *a cry* or *a shout*, and it evidently refers to the rumbling noise which precedes an earthquake. In 51:44 and elsewhere it is spoken of as sa’iqah, which means any *destructive punishment*

(*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), carrying sometimes the same significance as *saiḥah*. In 69:5, *Thamūd* is said to have been destroyed by means of *taghiyah*, which means an *excessively severe punishment*. Both of these descriptions are applicable to an earthquake.

79 So he turned away from them and said: O my people, I delivered to you the message of my *Rabb* and gave you good advice, but you love not good advisers.^a

80 And (We sent) Lût, when he said to his people: Do you commit an abomination which no one in the world did before you?^a

81 Surely you come to males with lust instead of females. Nay, you are a people exceeding bounds.

82 And the answer of his people was no other than that they said: Turn them out of your town; surely they are a people who aspire to purity!

79a. This evidently refers to the survivors from the great disaster.

80a. In the chronological order which this chapter keeps in view, Ibrâhîm should have been mentioned next, but his name is here omitted for two reasons; firstly, because only those prophets are mentioned whose enemies were destroyed before their eyes; and, secondly, because Ibrâhîm's history has already been dealt with in the last chapter, to which this forms, as it were, a supplement. Hence, we come to Lût, Ibrâhîm's nephew. For other references to Lût in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, see 6:86; 11:77.83; 15:61.74; 21:74, 75; 26:160.173; 27:54.58; 29:32 .35; 37:133 - 136; 51:32.37; 53:53. 54; 54:34.38; 66:10. Lût is one of those prophets who have been maligned not only in Rabbinical literature but also in the Bible. It is clear that Lot was considered a righteous servant by Abraham (Gen. 18:23), but a little further on we are told that Lot was guilty of incestuous intercourse with his daughters, which shows him to be extremely licentious. The record here has evidently been manipulated.

The question whether Lot was a prophet is answered in the affirmative by Sale, but Wherry denies it.

If Gen. 19:30.38 is a faithful record, Lot cannot take his place even among the righteous; whereas, his being saved in the destruction of Sodom is clear proof of his righteousness, when read along with Gen. 18:23. Sale has, however, produced the additional testimony of the apostle Peter, who says: “And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)” (2 Pet. 2:7, 8). His vexing his soul with the wickedness of the people of Sodom can only be true if he was a preacher of righteousness among those people. And again, why should Lot have gone, being a just man, to settle among a wicked people, had he not been charged with the duty of reforming them?

83 So We delivered him and his followers,^a except his wife – she was of those who remained behind.

84 And We rained upon them a rain.^a See, then, what was the end of the guilty!

SECTION 11: **Shu‘aib**

85 And to Midian (We sent) their brother Shu‘aib. He said: O my people, serve Allâh, you have no deity other than Him. Clear proof indeed has come to you from your *Rabb*, so give full measure and weight and diminish not to men their things, and make not mischief in the land after its reform. This is better for you, if you are believers.^a

86 And lie not in wait on every road, threatening and turning away from Allâh’s way him who believes in Him and seeking to make it crooked. And remember when you were few, then He multiplied you, and see what was the end of the mischief-makers!

83a. The word *ahl* is here interpreted as meaning *those who believed in him* (Bd). It means in the first place a man’s *family* or *near relatives*, being, in fact, the equivalent of *al*, but with reference to root-meaning both have a wider significance, including all *those who bear a relation to a man, as members to a*

head (from the root *ala*, meaning *he returned* or *bore a relation*, to a man) *by religion* or *persuasion* or *kindred*. There is, however, this difference between *al* and *ahl*, that the former is used only in relation to eminent men while the latter may refer to men in general (R).

84a. *Matr* or *maṭar* (lit. *raining*) is also used in the sense of *doing good* or *evil*, according to the object by which it is followed, but *am.ara* (which is the form used here) is only used in relation to punishment (T). The punishment which overtook the people of Lût is frequently called *maṭar* or *rain*, while in 11:82 and 15:74 stones are said to have been rained down upon them, and in 54:34 it is called *ḥasib*, which primarily signifies a *thrower* or *pelter of stones*. It was a volcanic eruption combined with an earthquake.

85a. References to Shu‘aib are contained in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân here and in 11:84. 95; 15:78, 79; 26:176.191, and 29:36, 37. Shu‘aib was a descendant of Abraham in the fifth generation. Madyan or Midian was the name of Abraham’s son by Keturah (Gen. 25:2), and a city of the same name grew up on the Red Sea, southeast of Mount Sinai, where his descendants settled, and is mentioned by Ptolemy as Modiana. Shu‘aib is generally supposed to be another name for Jethro. The injunction *diminish not to men their things* stands for not depriving or defrauding men of their rights, or not acting wrongfully towards men in respect of their things or dues.

87 And if there is a party of you who believe in that wherewith I am sent and another party who believe not, then wait patiently till Allâh judges between us; and He is the Best of Judges.

Part 9

88 The arrogant chiefs of his people said: We will certainly turn you out, O Shu‘aib, and those who believe with you from our town, or you shall come back to our religion. He said: Even though we dislike (it)?

89 Indeed we should have forged a lie against Allâh, if we go back to your religion after Allâh has delivered us from it. And it is not for us to go back to it, unless

Allâh our *Rabb* please. Our *Rabb* comprehends all things in His knowledge. In Allâh do we trust. Our *Rabb*, decide between us and our people with truth, and Thou art the Best of Deciders.

90 And the chiefs of his people, who disbelieved, said: If you follow Shu‘aib, you are surely losers.

91 So the earthquake overtook them, and they were motionless bodies in their abode^a.

92 Those who called Shu‘aib a liar were as though they had never dwelt therein - those who called Shu‘aib a liar, they were the losers.

93 So he turned away from them and said: O my people, indeed I delivered to you the messages of my *Rabb* and I gave you good advice; how, then, should I be sorry for a disbelieving people?^a

SECTION 12: Makkans warned of Punishment

94 And We did not send a prophet to a town but We seized its people with distress and affliction that they might humble themselves.^a

95 Then We changed the evil for good,^a till they became affluent and said: Distress and happiness did indeed touch our fathers. So We took them by surprise while they perceived not.

96 And if the people of the towns had believed and kept their duty, We would certainly have opened for them blessings from the heavens and the earth. But they rejected, so We seized them for what they earned.

97 Are the people of the towns, then, secure from Our punishment coming to them by night while they sleep?

91a. This punishment is twice referred to as *rajfah*, or the *earthquake*, and once in 11:94 as *saiḥah*, which also stands for earthquake.

93a. He had fully warned his people, and it was their own fault that they did not benefit by his good advice.

94a. That the histories of the nations are meant as a warning to all opponents of truth is evident. It is also plain that even afflictions and distress, when sent on a people, are meant for their spiritual betterment, *that they might humble themselves*.

95a. By *good* and *evil* are meant here *ease* and *distress* respectively.

98 Or, are the people of the towns secure from Our punishment coming to them in the morning while they play?^a

99 Are they secure from Allâh's plan? But none feels secure from Allâh's plan except the people who perish.

SECTION 13: Mûsâ sent to Pharaoh with signs

100 Is it not clear to those who inherit the earth after its (former) residents that, if We please, We would afflict them for their sins, and seal their hearts so they would not hear?

101 Such were the towns some of whose news We have related to you. And certainly their messengers came to them with clear arguments, but they would not believe what they had rejected before. Thus does Allâh seal the hearts of the disbelievers.

102 And We found not in most of them (faithfulness to) covenant; and We found most of them to be transgressors.

103 Then, after them, We sent Mûsâ with Our messages to Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they disbelieved them. See, then, what was the end of the mischief-makers!^a

98a. *Duh-an*, which is here translated as *morning*, begins after sunrise, according to some when the sun is yet low, and according to others when it is somewhat high (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The *playing* may be taken either literally or it may indicate the worldly engagements in which they were occupied to the utter neglect of higher aspirations.

103a. The history of Mûsâ has already been briefly referred to in connection with the stubbornness of the Isrâ'îlites, but here it is taken up in greater detail, and is continued from here to the end of the 21st section. The reason for this enlargement

is to be found in the fact that the Holy Prophet had more in common with Mûsâ than with any other prophet, and he is called the like of Mûsâ in the Mûsâic prophecies. References to Mûsâ's history are contained in the following places in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân: 2:49 -71; 4:153; 5:20.26; 7:103.156; 7:159-160; 10:75-92; 11:96 - 99; 17:101-104; 18:60-82; 19:51-53; 20:9-98; 23:45-49; 26:10-68; 27:7-14; 28:3- 44; 37:114-122; 40:23-54; 43:46- 56; 44:17-33; 51:38-40; 61:5 and 79:15-26.

104 And Mûsâ said: O Pharaoh, surely I am a messenger from the *Rabb* of the worlds,

105 Worthy of not saying anything about Allâh except the truth. I have come to you indeed with clear proof from your *Rabb*, so let the Children of Isrâ'îl go with me.

106 He said: If you have come with a sign, produce it, if you are truthful.

107 So he threw his rod, then lo! It was a serpent manifest.

108 And he drew forth his hand, and lo! it was white to the beholders.^a

108a Here again we have an instance of the correctness of the Qur'ânic statement where it differs with the Bible, showing the incompleteness of the Bible narrative. In the fourth chapter of Exodus it is clearly stated that two signs were given to Moses - that of his rod turning into a serpent and that of his hand becoming white when put into his bosom; and Exodus 4:8 clearly states that Moses was commanded to show both these signs to Pharaoh. But when we read chapter 7, where the performance of those miracles before Pharaoh is recorded, we find mention only of the miracle of the rod.

Another question worth considering here is as to the nature of these miracles. As is stated elsewhere in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, Mûsâ's rod was an ordinary staff: "I lean on it, and I beat the leaves with it for my sheep, and I have other uses for it" (20:18). It is nowhere stated that whenever he threw it down his rod turned into a serpent. Even when the Isrâ'îlites were in the greatest danger, Mûsâ made no use of it. Only on two occasions the rod is stated to have turned into a serpent, viz. (1) when Mûsâ held communion with Allâh before going to

Pharaoh; (2) when he first came before Pharaoh, or when Pharaoh summoned the enchanter to his help.

Now on the first of these occasions it is certain that the rod was seen turning into a serpent by Mûsâ alone, when he was in a state of vision - a state in which a person is temporarily transported to a spiritual sphere. This is the state in which the prophets and other righteous men receive Divine revelation; and while it is certainly not a state of sleep, it is equally certain that it is a state in which the mind rises above the limitations of physical environment, beholding things which are invisible to the physical eye, and hearing things which the physical ear cannot hear. It is therefore certain that on the first occasion Mûsâ observed the change whilst in the same state of temporary transportation in which he received revelation. The miracle took place on the latter occasion when others besides Moses witnessed the change. But it is a fact that the effect of inspired vision is sometimes so strong that others besides the seer partake in it.

Yet, whatever their real nature, these miracles of Mûsâ were not mere play. The great truth underlying the 'asâ or the rod turning into a serpent, was that the followers of Mûsâ, as represented by his rod, would prevail over their enemies; and the significance underlying the whitening of Mûsâ's hand was that his arguments would shine forth with clearness.

For these interpretations of the two occurrences, see 20:20*a*, 22*a*.

SECTION 14: **Pharaoh summons Enchanters**

109 The chiefs of Pharaoh's people said: Surely this is a skilful enchanter!

110 He intends to turn you out of your land. What do you advise?^{*a*}

111 They said: Put him off and his brother, and send summoners into the cities,

112 To bring to thee every skilful enchanter.

113 And the enchanters came to Pharaoh, saying: We must surely have a reward if we prevail.^{*a*}

114 He said: Yes, and you shall certainly be of those who are near (to me).

115 They said: O Mûsâ, will you cast, or shall we (be the first to) cast?

116 He said: Cast. So when they cast, they deceived the people's eyes and overawed them, and they produced a mighty enchantment.

117 And We revealed to Mûsâ: Cast your rod. Then lo! It swallowed up their lies.^a

118 So the truth was established, and that which they did became null.

110a. *Amr* here carries the significance of *advising* or *counselling*. One says *murnî* meaning *counsel me, advise me* (Lane). The words are apparently Pharaoh's.

113a. Compare Exodus 7:11: "Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers".

117a. Compare Exodus 7:12: "For they cast every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods". The enchanters' show is here spoken of as *the lies they told*.

119 There they were vanquished, and they went back abased.

120 And the enchanters fell down prostrate.

121 They said: We believe in the *Rabb* of the worlds,

122 The *Rabb* of Mûsâ and Hârûn.

123 Pharaoh said: You believe in Him before I give you permission! Surely this is a plot which you have plotted in the city, to turn out of it its people, but you shall know!

124 I shall certainly cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, then I shall crucify you all together!

125 They said: Surely to our *Rabb* do we return.

126 And you take revenge on us only because we believed in the messages of our *Rabb* when they came to us. Our *Rabb*, pour out on us patience and cause us to die in submission (to You)!^a

126a. The Bible does not speak of the magicians as believing in the Divine mission of Moses when they were vanquished. On the other hand, they are shown as still opposing Moses when other signs were shown later on, though their hearts seem to have been impressed with Moses' truth, as on one occasion they are

shown as saying to Pharaoh that there was “the finger of God” in what Moses did (Exodus 8:19). Notwithstanding this conviction, they are still shown as opposing Moses and as suffering from boils like Pharaoh’s followers (Exodus 9:11). But according to Rabbinical literature, some Egyptians accompanied Moses when he departed from Egypt, which is corroborated by the Bible narrative: “And a mixed multitude went up also with them” (Exodus 12:38). “For the Egyptians, when the time fixed for Moses’ descent from the mountain had expired, came in a body, forty thousand of them, accompanied by two Egyptian magicians, Yanos and Yambros, the same who imitated Moses in producing the signs and the plagues in Egypt” (Jewish Encyclopedia). These two magicians are also mentioned in 2 Tim. 3:8, which is a further corroboration of the truth of the statement made in the Qur’ân and of the incompleteness of the Bible narrative.

It should be further noted that the magicians could not have believed unless they had heard the arguments of Moses as to the existence of God and as to a life after death in which they now believed so staunchly that they were ready to sacrifice their very lives for their faith. It shows that Moses had explained the essential religious truths to the whole gathering before he showed the signs.

SECTION 15: Isrâ’îlites’ Persecution continues

127 And the chiefs of Pharaoh’s people said: Will you leave Mûsâ and his people to make mischief in the land and forsake you and your deities? He said: We will slay their sons and spare their women, and surely we are dominant over them.^a

128 Mûsâ said to his people: Ask help from Allâh and be patient.

Surely the land is Allâh’s - He gives it for an inheritance to such of His servants as He pleases. And the end is for those who keep their duty.

129 They said: We were persecuted before you came to us and since you have come to us. He said: It may be that your *Rabb* will destroy your enemy and make you rulers in the land, then He will see how you act.^a

SECTION 16: Mûsâ shows more Signs

130 And certainly We overtook Pharaoh's people with droughts and diminution of fruits that they might be mindful.

131 But when good befell them they said: This is due to us. And when evil afflicted them, they attributed it to the ill-luck of Mûsâ and those with him. Surely their evil fortune is only from Allâh, but most of them know not.^a

127a. The word translated as *dominant* is *qâhir*, which signifies *one who has overcome, conquered, or subdued another* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

129a. By *the land* is meant the *Promised Land*, for thither was Mûsâ taking them. Their being made rulers in the land was conditional upon their doing good; this is suggested in the concluding words of the verse.

132 And they said: Whatever sign you may bring to us to charm us therewith — we shall not believe in you.

133 So We sent upon them widespread death,^a and the locusts and the lice and the frogs and the blood — clear signs.^b But they behaved haughtily and they were a guilty people.

134 And when the plague^a fell upon them, they said: O Moses, pray for us to your *Rabb* as He has made promise with you. If you remove the plague from us, we will certainly believe in thee and will let the Children of Isrâ'îl go with you.

135 But when We removed the plague from them till a term which they should attain, lo! They broke (their promise).^a

131a. The original word for *evil fortune* is *tâ'ir*, lit., *a bird*. See 17:13a for explanation. *Their evil fortune is from Allâh* means that the misfortunes which they were made to suffer were brought about by Allâh as a result of their own evil deeds.

133a. *Tûfân* (from *tâfa*, *he went round or circuited the thing*) is originally *every accident that besets men on all sides* (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain *al-Râghib al-Isfahânî*),

and hence it is also applied to *flood* or *deluge*. It also means *death*, or *quick and widespread death*; or *death prevailing generally* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Hence it might mean either *plague causing excessive death* or *flood*. *Widespread death*, as the true interpretation of *tûfân*, is also accepted by Bukhârî (Bukhârî 65: vii).

133b. The Bible mentions the following signs: (1) Turning of the water into blood; (2) Frogs; (3) lice; (4) flies; (5) plague upon beasts and men; (6) hail; (7) locusts; (8) Darkness; (9) death of the first-born. Of these the Qur'ân mentions the first two, the third, and the seventh in clear words; the fourth is included in the third; the fifth and the ninth are mentioned together as *tûfân* or *widespread death*; the hail is not mentioned, but the destruction of fruits, which was brought about by it, is mentioned in verse 130; while instead of the darkness we have the *drought* in that verse, which seems to have been the actual affliction, and of which darkness may have been a result either metaphorically or actually, because of hurricanes and storms darkening the land, as is usually the case in time of drought. The two signs of verse 130, with the five mentioned here, are the seven signs which, with the two signs of the rod and the white hand, make up the nine signs of 17:101 and 27:12.

134a. The reference is to the plague mentioned in the previous verse.

136 So We exacted retribution from them and drowned them in the sea, because they rejected Our signs and were heedless of them.

137 And We made the people who were deemed weak to inherit the eastern lands and the western ones which We had blessed. And the good word of your *Rabb* was fulfilled in the Children of Isrâ'îl - because of their patience. And We destroyed what Pharaoh and his people had wrought and what they had built.^a

138 And We took the Children of Isrâ'îl across the sea. Then they came to a people who were devoted to their idols. They said: O Mûsâ, make for us a deity as they have deities. He said: Surely you are an ignorant people!^a

139 (As to) these, that wherein they are engaged shall be destroyed and that which they do is vain.

140 He said: Shall I seek for you a deity other than Allâh, while He has made you excel (all) created things?^a

135a. A reference to Exodus, chapter 8.11, will show that Pharaoh again and again broke his promise to let the Children of Isrâ'îl go - promises which he made on condition that a certain affliction should be removed.

137a. The land that was *blessed* is none other than the Holy Land, for which a Divine promise was given to Abraham. The *good word* referred to here is that contained in Geneses 17:8. The eastern and the western lands might signify the eastern and the western tracts of the Holy Land, or the lands on the eastern and western sides of the Jordan.

138a. The Isrâ'îlites undoubtedly came across idolatrous nations in their wanderings in Syria. They themselves had idolatrous leanings: "The people gathered themselves together unto Aaron and said unto him, Up, make us gods which shall go before us!" (Exod. 32:1). Many other anecdotes show a similar tendency to idol-worship.

140a. Mûsâ's argument against idolatry is the one to which the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân repeatedly calls attention, viz. that man, being as it were the lord of creation under Allâh, and excelling the whole of creation, should not take objects lower than himself as his gods.

141 And when We delivered you from Pharaoh's people, who subjected you to severe torment, killing your sons and sparing your women. And therein was a great trial from your *Rabb*.

SECTION 17: Mûsâ receives the Law

142 And We appointed for Mûsâ thirty nights, and completed them with ten, so the appointed time of his *Rabb* was complete forty nights. And Mûsâ said to his brother Hârûn: Take my place among my people, and act well and follow not the way of the mischief-makers.

143 And when Mûsâ came at Our appointed time and his *Rabb* spoke to him, he said: My *Rabb*, show me (yourself) so that I may look at You. He said: You can not see Me; but look at the mountain; if it remains firm in its place, then will you see Me. So when his *Rabb* manifested His glory to the mountain, He made it crumble and Mûsâ fell down in a swoon. Then when he recovered, he said: Glory be to You! I turn to You, and I am the first of the believers.^a

143a. The highest bliss of paradise is said to be the sight of the Diving Being. The words addressed to Mûsâ, *you can not see Me*, do not negative the sight of the Divine Being in the life after death. All that they negative is the seeing of the Divine Being with the physical eye. Mûsâ's request seems to have been based on the elders' demand spoken of in 2:55. The crumbling of the mountain is the same as the rumbling of the earthquake of 2:55. I venture, however, another explanation. What Mûsâ wanted to see was the great manifestation of Divine glory which was reserved for the Holy Prophet Muḥammad. In fact both Mûsâ and 'Îsâ were not equal to the task which was reserved for the Prophet Muḥammad. According to the fabricated Bible, 'Îsâ said that he could not teach his followers all things but that when the Comforter makes his appearance he would guide them into all truth. That Moses was unequal to the Holy Prophet's task was clearly demonstrated by his falling down in a swoon when he beheld the Great Manifestation.

144 He said: O Mûsâ, surely I have chosen you above the people by My messages and My words. So take hold of what I give you and be of the grateful.

145 And We ordained^a for him in the tablets admonition of every kind and clear explanation of all things. So take hold of them with firmness and enjoin thy people to take hold of what is best thereof. I shall show you the abode of the transgressors.^b

146 I shall turn away from My messages those who are unjustly proud in the earth. And if they see every sign, they will not believe in it; and if they see the way of rectitude, they take it not for a way; and if they see the way of error, they take it for a way. This is because they reject Our messages and are heedless of them.

147 And those who reject Our messages and the meeting of the Hereafter - their deeds are fruitless. Can they be rewarded except for what they do?

SECTION 18: Isrâ'îlites worship a calf

148 And Mûsâ's people made of their ornaments a calf after him – a (lifeless) body,^a having a lowing sound. Could they not see that it spoke not to them, nor guided them in the way? They took it (for worship) and they were unjust.

145a. *Kataba* means *He* (Allâh) *prescribed, appointed or ordained and made obligatory* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The words *admonition of every kind* and *explanation of all things* cannot be taken generally, but are limited by the requirements of the time in which Mûsâ appeared.

145b. The meaning is that a time will come to the Isrâ'îlites when they will become transgressors, i.e. they will not keep the Divine commandments.

149 And when they repented^a and saw that they had gone astray, they said: If our *Rabb* have not mercy on us and forgive us, we shall certainly be of the losers.

150 And when Moses returned to his people, wrathful, grieved, he said: Evil is that which you have done after me! Did you hasten on the judgment of your *Rabb*?^a And he threw down the tablets and seized his brother by the head, dragging him towards him. He said: Son of my mother, the people reckoned me weak and had well-nigh slain me. So make not the enemies to rejoice over me and count me not among the unjust people.

148a. The word *jasad* means *a body*, as well as *red* or *intensely yellow*. The former meaning is the one generally adopted by the commentators, the significance being that the calf made was a mere body without a *nafs*. Yet it was so made that it gave a lowing sound like that of a calf. The other meaning also affords a true description of the calf, for, being made of gold ornaments, it was of a red or an intensely yellow colour.

149a. *Suq̣iṭa fī aidī-him* is a phrase which, by the consensus of opinion, means *they repented* (from *saqata*, *it fell down*). The phrase is said not to have been known before the Qur'ān (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Explaining the word in his commentary, Bukhārī says: *Everyone who repents is spoken of as suq̣iṭa fī yadi-hi* (Bukhārī 65: vii). Or *nadm* is understood and the meaning is, *when regret was brought before them*. The Isrā'īlites' repentance, though mentioned first, was subsequent to Mūsā's return (2:54). In fact, the order here is not historical, but one connecting the repentance with the sin, mentioning the events which brought about that repentance afterwards.

150a. The word '*ajila*' is used as a transitive in the sense of *sabaqa*, and the meaning is, *did you hasten the commandment of your Rabb?* The *amr*, or *the commandment*, has been explained as meaning *the appointed time* or *the judgment*.

151 He said: My *Rabb*, forgive me and my brother, and admit us to Your mercy, and You are the Most Merciful of those who show mercy.^a

SECTION 19: The Taurât and the Prophet's Advent

152 Those who took the calf (for a deity) - wrath from their *Rabb*, and disgrace in this world's life, will surely overtake them. And thus do We recompense those who invent lies.

153 And those who do evil deeds, then repent after that and believe - your *Rabb* after that is surely Forgiving, Merciful.

154 And when Mūsā's anger calmed down, he took up the tablets; and in the writing thereof was guidance and mercy for those who fear their *Rabb*.^a

151a. Aaron's excuse and Mūsā's acceptance of it show clearly that Aaron was quite innocent, having had a share neither in making the calf nor in worshipping it. The Bible account, which makes a righteous prophet of Allāh guilty of the most heinous crime, must be rejected as untrue. That forgiveness was not sought for any fault in connection with calf-worship is clear from the fact that Mūsā joins himself

with Hârûn in the prayer given in this verse. Forgiveness here, as frequently elsewhere in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, is equivalent to the Divine protection, which every man should seek against the frailties and shortcomings of human nature. See 2:286a for a full explanation of the word *ghafr*.

154a. According to Exodus 32:19 Moses “brake them beneath the mountain” in his anger, and Exodus chapter 34 describes how the tablets were renewed. The Qur'ân differs from this narrative. It does not state that the tablets were broken or renewed, but mentions their being taken up by Mûsâ after his anger had calmed and while the writing was still on them.

155a. Exodus 24:1 speaks of Moses having taken up seventy elders of Israel along with him, though they were forbidden to “come near the Lord”, and on this occasion Moses was in the mountain forty days and forty nights (Exodus 24:18). Although he is also spoken of in the Bible as having gone into the mountains after the incident of the calf-worship and to have remained there for forty days and forty nights (Exodus 34:28), the allusion in the Qur'ân is to the first incident. There was no occasion for a second visit according to the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân.

155 And Mûsâ chose of his people seventy men for Our appointment.^a So when the earthquake overtook them, he said: My *Rabb*, if You had pleased, You had destroyed them before and myself (too). Will You destroy us for that which the foolish among us have done? It is naught but Your trial. You cause to perish thereby whom You pleases and guide whom You please. You are our Protector, so forgive us and have mercy on us, and Thou art the Best of those who forgive.

156 And ordain for us good in this world's life and in the Hereafter, for surely we turn to Thee. He said: I afflict with My chastisement whom I please, and My mercy encompasses all things. So I ordain it for those who keep their duty and pay the poor-rate, and those who believe in Our messages^a.

156a. No attribute of the Divine Being receives such prominence in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân as the attribute of *mercy*. Evil there is in the world, and the evil-doers must receive their due, but mark the contrast: *And My mercy encompasses all things*. The truth is that even chastisement is a phase of Divine mercy, because

it seeks not to punish, but to correct the evil-doers. Divine mercy, we are here told, is specially ordained for those who keep their duty and who believe in the Divine revelations given to Prophet Muḥammad.

157a. For *ummî*, meaning *one who neither writes nor reads a writing*, see 2:78a. Hence the Arabs are called an *ummî* people, and the *Ummî* Prophet is either *the prophet of the ummî people* (i.e. *the Arabs*) *because he was like them*, or *he was so called because he himself did not know reading and writing* (*Al-Mufradât fî Ḡharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Ḥusain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî). But according to some, the prophet is called *Ummî* because he came from the *Umm al-Qurâ*, i.e. Makkah, which is the Metropolis of Arabia (*Majma' Bihâr al-Anwâr* (Dictionary of Ḥadîth), by Al-Shaikh Muḥammad Tâhir).

The suggestion of Rodwell that the word *ummî* means *gentile* in the sense of a non-Jewish or heathen people is not supported by any recognized authority; see 2:78, where the Jews are called *ummî*. *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane, it is true, gives *gentile* as the signification of *ummî*, but a reference to the authorities he quotes clearly shows that if the word *gentile* expresses the meaning of *ummî*, it does so in the general sense of *one belonging to a gens* or *clan*; therefore Lane's conclusion that in a tropical and secondary sense *ummî* means *heathen* is entirely without foundation.

As for the fact that the Holy Prophet was unable to read or write before revelation came to him, there can be no two opinions. On this point the Qur'ân is conclusive: “**And you did not recite before it any book, nor did you transcribe one with your right hand**” (29:48). There is a difference of opinion, however, as to whether he could read or write after revelation. Without entering into the details of this controversy I may remark that, while there is ground for believing that he could read, he still had his letters written by others; see 29:48a.

157 Those who follow the Messenger-Prophet, the *Ummî*,^a whom they find mentioned in the *Taurât* and the *Injîl*.^b He enjoins them good and forbids them evil, and makes lawful to them the good things and prohibits for them impure things, and removes from them their burden and the shackles which were on them.

So those who believe in him and honour him and help him,^c and follow the light which has been sent down with him - these are the successful.

SECTION 20: Divine Favours on Isrâ'îlites

158 Say: O mankind, surely I am the Messenger of Allâh to you all, of Him, Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth.^a There is no deity but He; He gives life and causes death. So believe in Allâh and His Messenger, the *Ummî* Prophet who believes in Allâh and His words, and follow him so that you may be guided aright.

157b. There are many prophecies regarding the advent of the Holy Prophet both in the Old and the New Testament. The Torah and the Gospel are specially mentioned here because Moses and Jesus were respectively the first and the last of the Israelite prophets. Deuteronomy 18:15.18 speaks very clearly of the raising of a prophet (who shall be the like of Moses) from among the brethren of the Isrâ'îlites, i.e. the Ismâ'îlites or the Arabs, while Deuteronomy 33:2 speaks of the shining forth of the manifestation of the Lord, i.e. his coming in full glory "from Mount Paran". The Gospel is full of the prophecies of the advent of the Holy Prophet; Matt. 21:33. 44, Mark 12:1.11, Luke 20:9 .18, where the Lord of the vineyard comes after the son (i.e. Jesus) is maltreated, and Matthew 13:31.32, John 1:21, John 14:16, John 14:26 all contain such prophecies.

157c. Noldeke's supposition that there is a reference to the *Anṣâr*, i.e. *the helpers* of Madînah, here, and Rodwell's conclusion that hence the verse must have been added at Madînah, are not entitled to serious consideration. Was the Prophet without any helpers at Makkah?

158a. As against the various prophets spoken of in this chapter, every one of whom was sent to *his people (qaumi-hî)*, the Prophet Muḥammad is here spoken of as having been sent to *all people*, to the whole of mankind. Thus the appearance of the Prophet Muḥammad was a turning point in the history of humanity. The day of the national prophet was over and a new era had dawned in which the whole of humanity was ultimately to be united under one spiritual head. Six hundred years

before, “Jesus Christ”, the last of the national prophets, said to a non-Isrâ’îlite woman that he was “not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Isrâ’îl” (Matthew 15:24); and being pressed, only added: “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and cast it to dogs” (Matthew 15:26). In the new era, however, the idea of *nationality* had to give place to the broader idea of *one humanity*, and the basis of it was laid by the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân.

159 And of Mûsâ’s people is a party who guide with truth, and therewith they do justice.^a

160 And We divided them into twelve tribes, as nations. And We revealed to Mûsâ when his people asked him for water: Strike the rock with your staff; so out flowed from it twelve springs. Each tribe knew its drinking-place. And We made the clouds to give shade over them and We sent to them manna and quails. Eat of the good things We have given you. And they did not do Us any harm, but they wronged themselves.

161 And when it was said to them: Dwell in this town and eat from it whence you wish, and make petition for forgiveness, and enter the gate submissively, We shall forgive you your wrongs. We shall give more to the doers of good.

162 But those who were unjust among them changed it for a word other than that which they were told, so We sent upon them a pestilence from heaven for their wrongdoing.^a

159a. Thus the Qur’ân recognizes that there were good people among the Jews.

162a. For the statements made in vv. 160 .162, see 2:60a, 60b; 2:57a, 57b; 2:58a, 58b, 58c; 2:59a, 59b.

SECTION 21: Israelites’ Transgressions

163 And ask them about the town which stood by the sea. When they violated the Sabbath, when their fish came to them on their Sabbath day on the surface, and when it was not their Sabbath they came not to them. Thus did We try them because they transgressed.^a

164 And when a party of them said: Why preach you to a people whom Allâh would destroy or whom He would chastise with a severe chastisement? They said: To be free from blame before your Lord, and that haply they may guard against evil.

165 So when they neglected that whereof they had been reminded, We delivered those who forbade evil and We overtook those who were iniquitous with an evil chastisement because they transgressed.

166 So when they revoltingly persisted in that which they had been forbidden, We said to them: Be (as) apes, despised and hated.^a

167 And when your *Rabb* declared that He would send against them to the day of Resurrection those who would subject them to severe torment. Surely your *Rabb* is Quick in requiting; and surely He is Forgiving, Merciful.

163a. The city referred to here is generally recognized as being Ela, which was situated on the Red Sea. The incident alluded to is mentioned as an instance of the Jewish violation of the Sabbath. The fish appeared on the surface of the water on the Sabbath because they had a sense of security on that day. This was a temptation for the people to break the law.

168 And We divided them in the earth into parties - some of them are righteous and some of them are otherwise. And We tried them with blessings and misfortunes that they might turn.

169 Then after them came an evil posterity^a who inherited the Book, taking the frail goods of this low life and saying: It will be forgiven us. And if the like good came to them, they would take it (too).^b Was not a promise taken from them in the Book that they would not speak anything about Allâh but the truth? And they study what is in it. And the abode of the Hereafter is better for those who keep their duty. Do you not then understand?

170 And as for those who hold fast by the Book and keep up prayer - surely We waste not the reward of the reformers.

171 And when We shook the mountain over them *as if it were a covering*, and they thought that it was going to fall down upon them: Hold on firmly that which

We have given you, and be mindful of that which is in it, so that you may guard against evil.^a

169a. Lexicologists recognize a difference between *khalf* and *khalaf*, the former being applied to *evil* and the latter to *good*, whether a son or a generation (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

169b. First they commit a crime for the frail goods of this life, saying that they will be forgiven; then persist in their evil course and when a similar occasion arises, they again return to the old crimes. There is no repentance.

171a. The stories built upon these simple words by some commentators must be rejected. The words simply relate the experience of the elders of Isrâ'îl when they stood at the foot of the mountain, which rose above them. There was a severe earthquake, which is referred to in verse 155, causing them to think that the mountain would fall down upon them. According to *Lisân al-'Arab* (Dictionary), by 'Allâmah Abu-l-Faḍl Jamâl al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Mukarram, the primary significance of *natq* is *za'za'*, which means the *moving, agitating, shaking, or putting a thing into a state of commotion*. Thus the use of *nataqnâ* instead of *rafa'nâ* (2:63) clearly explains that the mountain was shaken violently by an earthquake while the elders of Isrâ'îl stood at its foot. *Natq* has also another meaning, viz. *taking up from the roots*, but this is not the significance here.

SECTION 22: Evidence of Divine Impress on Human being's Nature

172 And when your Rabb brought forth from the children of *Âdam*, from their loins, their descendants, and made them bear witness about themselves: Am I not your *Rabb*? They said: Yes; we bear witness. Lest you should say on the day of Resurrection: We were unaware of this,^a

173 Or (lest) you should say: Only our fathers ascribed partners (to Allâh) before (us), and we were (their) descendants after them. Will You destroy us for what liars did?^a

174 And thus do We make the messages clear, and that haply they may return.

175 And recite to them the news of him to whom We give Our messages, but he withdraws himself from them, so the shaitân follows him up, and he is of those who perish.^a

176 And if We had pleased, We would have exalted him thereby; but he clings to the earth^a and follows his low desire. His parable is as the parable of the dog . if thou drive him away, he lolls out his tongue, and if you leave him alone, he lolls out his tongue. Such is the parable of the people who reject Our messages. So relate the narrative that they may reflect.

172a. The verse does not mention the bringing forth of descendants from Âdam, but from the children of Âdam, and this seems clearly to refer to every human being as he comes into existence. The evidence is, therefore, that which human nature itself affords. It is, in fact, the same evidence which is elsewhere spoken of as being afforded by human nature as in “the nature made by Allâh in which He has created men” (30:30).

173a. The Arabic word is *mubtîl*, which means *one who says a thing in which is no truth or reality* (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur’ân* (Dictionary of Qur’ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain *al-Râghib al-Isfahânî* -and- *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

175a. Balaam, Umayyah ibn Abî Salt, Abû ‘Amir, and all the hypocrites, has been respectively indicated as the persons referred to here, but the best explanation is supplied by Qatâdah, who says: *It speaks generally of everyone to whom guidance is brought but he turns aside from it.* This view is corroborated by what is stated at the conclusion of the parable in verse 176; *such is the parable of the people who reject Our messages.*

177 Evil is the likeness of the people who reject Our messages and wrong their own *nafs*.

178 He whom Allâh guides is on the right way; and he whom He leaves in error - they are the losers.

179 And certainly We have created for hell many of the *jinn* and the men - they have hearts wherewith they understand not, and they have eyes wherewith they see

not, and they have ears wherewith they hear not. They are as cattle; nay, they are more astray. These are the heedless ones.^a

180 And Allâh's are the best names,^a so call on Him thereby and leave alone those who violate the sanctity^b of His names. They will be recompensed for what they do.

176a. *Earth* here stands for all that is earthly for things material. The people spoken of here are those who do not care for the higher values of life.

179a. Many men and jinn are created for hell, but they are none other than the heedless ones who do not care for what is said. They have been given hearts, but they do not use them to understand the truth; they have been given eyes, but they do not employ them to see the truth; they have been given ears, but they turn a deaf ear to the truth.

This has been stated to show that Allâh has not created them differently from others, but they themselves do not use the faculties which Allâh has granted them.

180a. By *al-asmâ' al-husnâ* is meant *names expressing the most excellent attributes of the Divine Being*. By *calling on Him thereby* is meant that man should always keep the Divine attributes before his mind, endeavouring to possess those attributes, for it is only thus that he can attain to perfection.

180b. *Yulhidûn* is from *al.ada*, meaning *he deviated from the right course* with respect to a thing (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). According to the *Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî, it means *a deviation from the right course with respect to the names of Allâh, or violation of the sanctity of His names*, and it is of two kinds: firstly, *giving Him an improper or inaccurate attribute*; and secondly, *to interpret His attributes in a manner which does not befit Him*. Polytheism of every kind is, therefore, a violation of the sanctity of the Divine names.

181 And of those whom We have created is a community^a who guide with the truth and therewith do justice.

SECTION 23: The Coming of the Doom

182 And those who reject Our messages - We lead them (to destruction) step by step from whence they know not.

183 And I grant them respite. Surely My scheme is effective.^a

184 Do they not reflect (that) there is no madness in their companion? He is only a plain warner.

185 Do they not consider the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what things Allâh has created, and that it may be that their doom has drawn nigh? In what announcement after this will they then believe?

186 Whomsoever Allâh leaves in error, there is no guide for him. And He leaves them alone in their inordinacy, blindly wandering on.

181a. "This is my community," the Prophet is reported to have said (IJ, v. ix, p. 86).

183a. The significance of the word *kaid* (translated here as *scheme*) is much misunderstood, like that of *makr*. *Kaid* indicates *the exercising of art, ingenuity, cunning or skill in the management or ordering of affairs, with excellent consideration or deliberation, and ability to manage with subtlety according to his own free will* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Thus *kâda* (inf. n. *kaid*) means *he contrived, devised or plotted a thing, whether good or bad* (*Lisân al-‘Arab* (Dictionary), by ‘Allâmah Abu-l-Faḍl Jamâl al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Mukarram). And again *kâda* (aorist *yakîdu*) means *he worked or laboured at or upon anything; he laboured, took pains, exerted himself, strove or struggled to do, executed or accomplished anything; he laboured, strove or struggled with anything to prevail or overcome or to effect an object* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). In a verse of al-‘Ajjâj, the word *kaid*, occurring in reference to God, is rendered by the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane as meaning *His skilful ordering*.

187 They ask you about the Hour,^a when will it come to pass? Say: The knowledge thereof is with my *Rabb* only. None but He will manifest it at its time.

It is momentous in the samâwât and the earth. It will not come to you but of a sudden. They ask you as if you were solicitous about it. Say: Its knowledge is with Allâh only, but most people know not.

188 Say: I control not benefit or harm for myself except as Allâh please. And had I known the unseen, I should have much of good, and no evil would touch me. I am but a warner and the giver of good news to a people who believe.^a

SECTION 24: The Final Word

189 He it is Who created you from a single *nafs*, and of the same did He make his mate, that he might find comfort in her.^a So when he covers her she bears a light burden, then moves about with it. Then when it grows heavy, they both call upon Allâh, their *Rabb*: If You give us a good one, we shall certainly be of the grateful.^b

187a. That is, the Hour with which they are threatened as being the hour of their doom. The word *sâ'at* or the *hour* is used in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân to indicate both the doom of the guilty in this life and the time when a perfect manifestation of rewards and punishments will take place in the Hereafter.

188a. The simplicity and nobility of this statement as indicating the mission of a prophet is unsurpassed. He gives glad news of triumph to those who believe, warns the evil-doers of the evil consequences of their deeds in this life as well as in the next, but he does not claim the possession of Divine powers. It is stated that on the day of the death of his son Ibrâhîm, a total eclipse of the sun was witnessed. Some people began to whisper that the darkening of the sun was due to the death of the Prophet's son; but he was too sincere to allow men to remain under such a delusion, although it was calculated to enhance his dignity in the eyes of his followers. He ascended the pulpit and thus addressed the people: "Surely the sun and the moon are two signs of Allâh; they do not get eclipsed in consequence of the death of anybody nor on account of anyone's life, so when you see this then call on Allâh, and magnify Him and pray to Him and give alms" (Bukhârî 16:2).

189a. *Sakn* originally signifies *being still, motionless, or quiet*, but *sakana ilai-hi* means *he trusted to or relied upon it so as to be easy or quiet in mind or inclined to it, or he became familiar with it* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

190 But when He gives them a good one, they set up with Him associates in that which He has given them. High is Allâh above what they associate (with Him).

191 Do they associate (with Him) that which has created naught, while they are themselves created?

192 And they cannot give them help, nor can they help themselves.

193 And if you invite them to guidance, they will not follow you. It is the same to you whether you invite them or you are silent.^a

194 Those whom you call on besides Allâh are slaves like yourselves;^a so call on them, then let them answer you, if you are truthful.

195 Have they feet with which they walk, or have they hands with which they hold, or have they eyes with which they see, or have they ears with which they hear? Say: Call upon your associate-gods then plot against me and give me no respite.

189b. That this verse refers to Adam and Eve is rejected by all reliable commentators. It describes the condition of human beings in general and refers to the evidence of his nature, for when in distress he always turns to Allâh, but when in ease he goes after other gods or his own low desires. The verse clearly blames the idol-worshippers for associating others with Allâh, as is shown by the use of the plural in verse 190 and the verses that follow.

193a. This verse speaks of the utter heedlessness of the reprobate. Invitation to Truth must, however, be extended to all, though some may not benefit by it. The meaning is further clarified in verses 198, 199.

194a. *‘Ibâd* is the plural of *‘abd*, which means *a servant or a slave*, and applies to human beings as being a bondman to his Creator. Every created thing being in a state of subjugation to Allâh, as human beings is, the idols, along with other false

gods, are here spoken of as *'ibâd*, the significance being that they are all in a state of subjugation to Allâh.

196 Surely my Friend is Allâh, Who revealed the Book, and He befriends the righteous.

197 And those whom you call upon besides Him are not able to help you, nor can they help themselves.^a

198 And if you invite them to guidance, they hear not; and thou see them looking towards you, yet they see not.

199 Take to forgiveness and enjoin good and turn away from the ignorant.

200 And if a false imputation^a from the *shaitân* afflict you, seek refuge in Allâh. Surely He is Hearing, Knowing.

201 Those who guard against evil, when a visitation^a from the *shaitân* afflicts them, they become mindful, then lo! they see.^b

197a. There is a prophecy here that not only will the power of the opponents be frustrated in the coming struggles when they will find no help from their deities, but those very deities, i.e. the idols, will not be able to save themselves and will be annihilated.

200a. The primary significance of *nazagha-hû* is *he censured him and charged him with a vice and spoke evil of him* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtaḍâ). It also signifies *the sowing of dissensions*, and it is used in this sense in 12:100. According to the *Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî, the word signifies *entering upon an affair with the object of corrupting it*. I prefer the first signification, taking *nazgh* as equivalent to *false imputation*, the devil in this case, as frequently in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, standing for the devilish enemies who spread all kinds of false reports concerning the Prophet, against which he is told to seek refuge in Allâh.

201a. *Tâ'if* means *a visitation* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), originally *going round*. The *visitation of the shaitân* means *the happening of any grievous incident or the coming of an affliction* from the hands of the *shaitân*, or

the wicked acting in opposition to the righteous. Or the *shaitân's* visitation may signify anger which blinds a man.

201b. Being endowed with insight, they see their way out of the affliction. Or, the meaning is that anger does not blind them.

202 And their brethren^a increase them in error, then they cease not.

203 And when you bring them not a sign, they say: Why dost you not demand it? Say: I follow only that which is revealed to me from my *Rabb*. These are clear proofs from your *Rabb* and guidance and a mercy for a people who believe.

204 And when the Qur'ân is recited, listen to it and remain silent, that mercy may be shown to you.

205 And remember your *Rabb* within yourself humbly and fearing, and in a voice not loud, in the morning and the evening, and be not of the heedless.^a

206 Surely those who are with your *Rabb* are not too proud to serve Him, and they glorify Him and prostrate themselves before Him.^a

Prostration

202a. That is the brethren of the *shayâtîn*, or the *shaitân's* human associates.

205a. *Âsâl* is the plural of *asl* or *asîl* which means *the evening time*. Though the direction to remember Allâh is given in general terms, and requires a man to glorify Allâh at all times, yet the plural is used regarding the evening as referring to the fact that while there is only one regular prayer in the morning, in the evening there is a number of regular prayers, *Zuhr*, *Asr*, *Maghrib* and *Ishâ*.

206a. The recital of this verse is followed by an actual prostration, so that the physical state of the body may be in perfect agreement with the devotional condition of the mind. There are in all fifteen occasions in the Qur'ân where the believers are required to prostrate themselves, and the Prophet's practice was to prostrate himself when reciting such verses whether it was a recital during prayer service or on ordinary occasions. Other such verses are: 13:15; 16:50; 17:109; 19:58; 22:18; 22:77; 25:60; 27:26; 32:15; 38:24; 41:38; 53:62; 84:21 and 96:19.